

August Gardening Calendar

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There is still time to get your fall tomatoes planted if you do it early in the month. Select a plot that is in full sun. Prepare the soil with 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer over each 100 sq. ft. of garden bed. The recommended varieties for fall planting are determinate or semi-determinate so that they have a better chance of maturing their fruit before the freezing weather arrives. HM 8849, HM 1823, Tycoon, BHN 968, 444, Valley Cat Celebrity, Ruby Crush and Roma are among the recommended selections. Valley Cat, Tycoon, Celebrity and BHN 968 are nematode resistant. Use them to plant into soil infested with nematodes.

Place a tomato cage around each of your plants to keep the fruit off the ground. Three feet between plants is a good spacing. For a spider mite preventative spray consider mixing 2 tablespoons of seaweed extract in a gallon of water. Spray the underside of the leaves every week.

Do you remember the heavy weed cover that we experienced last winter? If you want to reduce the quantity of weeds such as henbit, bedstraw, thistle, dandelion, and beggars' lice that germinate, apply a pre-emergent herbicide such as Amaze or Dimension at the end of August. Follow label instructions.

The Monarch butterflies will be back to the Central Texas area in September, October, and November on their way to their Mexican wintering grounds. Zinnias, lantana, salvia, porter weed, Mexican flame vine, mint marigold, duranta, and fall asters will provide nectar while they are here. There is still time in early August to transplant blooming specimens from the nursery. Even zinnias planted by seed will provide blooms in October and November.

The expectation is that the Monarchs will not be laying eggs during their fall visit, but the Queens will still be laying eggs on the tropical milkweed. Recognize the Queen caterpillars on milkweed plants with their 3 antennae-like apparatus spaced along the body. Monarch caterpillars look like queens except they have only two of the appendages, one at each end of the body.

August is also a good time to plant wildflower seed for next spring's blooms. You can find seed packets for specific varieties such as poppies, bluebonnets, coreopsis, Mexican hat, and blue curl or you can plant one of the mixes for Texas. Blue Curl is especially outstanding for its bloom and to serve as a butterfly nectar source in spring. Check out the seeds at your favorite nursery or visit the wildflower nurseries on the internet.

Plant wildflower seeds on the soil surface in a sunny area where the seed can make contact with the soil. The seed should not be covered by soil but benefits if it is applied on a soil that has been raked or disked.

Some of the best hummingbird action occurs in the fall as the migrating black-chinned, ruby-throated and rufous hummingbirds move through our area. Prepare for their competition over nectar sources by getting some cape honeysuckle, firebush and penta in place along with hummingbird feeders on or near your patio. Use the firebush in the sun and the penta in the shade. They will also visit the zinnias, salvia, lantana, and porter weed along with the butterflies